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A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

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CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH,

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A LETTER,

&c.

My Dear Dr. Jelf,

I have known you so many years that I trust I may fitly address the present pages to you, on the subject of my recent Tract, without its being suspected in consequence that one, who from circumstances has taken no share whatever in any of the recent controversies in our Church, is implicated in any approval or sanction of it. It is merely as a friend that I write to you, through whom I may convey to others some explanations which seem necessary at this moment.

Four Gentlemen, Tutors of their respective Colleges, have published a protest against the Tract in question. I have no cause at all to complain of their so doing, though as I shall directly say, I consider that they have misunderstood me. They do not, I trust, suppose that I feel any offence or soreness at their proceeding; of course I naturally think that I am right and they are wrong; but this persuasion is quite consistent both with my honouring their zeal for Christian truth and their anxiety for the welfare of our younger members, and with my very great consciousness that, even though I be right in my principle, I may have advocated truth in a wrong way. Such acts as theirs when done honestly, as they have done them, must benefit all parties, and draw them nearer to each other in good will, if

not in opinion. But to proceed to the subject of this Letter.

I propose to offer some explanation of the Tract
I in two respects,—as to its principal statement and
II its object.

1. These Four Gentlemen, whom I have mentioned, have misunderstood me in so material a point, that it certainly is necessary to enter into the subject at some length. They consider that the Tract asserts that the Thirty-Nine Articles

"do not contain any condemnation of the doctrines of Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration of Images and Relics, the Invocation of Saints, and the Mass, as they are *taught authoritatively* by the Church of Rome, but only of certain absurd practices and opinions, which intelligent Romanists repudiate as much as we do."

Now in this statement I understand "taught authoritatively" to mean "*taught by the authorities*" of the Church of Rome. So I find it to be understood by others. It conveys the impression that the Tract holds that the Articles contain no condemnation of the doctrine of Purgatory and the rest as taught at present by the authorised teachers of the Church of Rome. On the contrary, I consider that they do contain a condemnation of the teaching of the present Roman authorities; I only say, that, whereas they were written before the decrees of Trent, they were not directed against those decrees.*

* The phrase "authoritative teaching" may also mean teaching which is *of itself* of authority, and from which no one may lawfully dissent, e. g. the decrees of Councils. In this sense, of course, the statement of the four Tutors is correct, but it involves no very heavy accusation, and I have in these pages joined issue upon it.

The Church of Rome taught authoritatively before those decrees, as well as since. Those decrees *expressed* her authoritative teaching, and they will continue to express it, while she so teaches. The simple question is, whether taken by themselves in their mere letter, they need express it; whether they go *so far* as the teaching of the present authorities; whether they may not be held by members of the Roman Church even at this day, in a sense short of that which existing authority attributes to them.

As to the present authoritative teaching of the Church of Rome, to judge by what we see of it in public, I think it goes very far indeed to substitute another Gospel for the true one. Instead of setting before the soul the Holy Trinity, and Heaven and Hell; it does seem to me, as a popular system, to preach the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, and Purgatory. If there ever was a system which required reformation, it is that of Rome at this day, or in other words (as I should call it) Romanism or Popery. Or, to use words in which I have only a year ago expressed myself, when contrasting Romanism with the teaching of the ancient Church,—

"In antiquity, the main aspect in the economy of redemption contains Christ, the Son of God, the Author and Dispenser of all grace and pardon, the Church His living representative, the Sacraments her instruments, Bishops her rulers, their collective decisions her voice, and Scripture her standard of truth. In the Roman Schools we find St. Mary and the Saints the prominent objects of regard and dispensers of mercy, Purgatory or Indulgences the means of obtaining it, the Pope the ruler and teacher of the Church, and miracles the warrant of doctrine. As to the

doctrines of Christ's merits and eternal life and death, these are points not denied (God forbid), but taken for granted and passed by, in order to make way for others of more present, pressing, and lively interest. That a certain change then in objective and external religion has come over the Latin, nay, and in a measure the Greek Church, we consider to be a plain historical fact; a change . . . . . sufficiently startling to recal to our minds, with very unpleasant sensations, the awful words, 'Though we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.'"

On the doctrine of Purgatory, this received Romanism goes beyond the Decrees of Trent thus: the Council of Trent says,

(1) "There is a Purgatory, and the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, and especially by the acceptable sacrifice of the Altar."

This definition does not explain the meaning of the word Purgatory—and it is not incompatible with the doctrine of the Greeks;—but the Catechism (2) of Trent, which expresses the existing Roman doctrine says,

"There is a Purgatorial *fire*, in which the souls of the pious are *tormented* for a certain time, and expiated, in order that an entrance may lie open to them into their eternal home, into which nothing defiled enters."

(3) And the popular notions go very far beyond this, as the extracts from the Homily, Jeremy Taylor, &c. in the Tract shew.

Again, the doctrine of Pardons is conveyed by the Divines of Trent in these words:—

"The use of Indulgences, which is most salutary to the

Christian people, and approved by the authority of Councils, is to be retained in the Church;"

it does not explain what the word Indulgence means:—it is unnecessary to observe how very definite and how monstrous is the doctrine which Luther assailed.

Again, the Divines at Trent say that "to Images are to be paid due honour and veneration;" and to those who honour the sacred volume, pictures of friends and the like, as we all do, I do not see that these very words of themselves can be the subject of objection. Far otherwise when we see the comment which the Church of Rome has put on them in teaching and practice. I consider its existing creed and popular worship to be as near idolatry as any portion of that Church can be, from which it is said that "the idols" shall be "utterly abolished."

Again, the Divines of Trent say that "it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke the Saints;" they do not even *command* the practice. But the actual honours paid to them in Roman Catholic countries, are in my judgment, as I have already said, a substitution of a wrong object of worship for a right one.

Again, the Divines at Trent say that the Mass is "a sacrifice truly propitiatory:" words which (considering they add, "The fruits of the Bloody Oblation are through this most abundantly obtained,—so far is the latter from detracting in any way from the former,") to my mind have no strength at all compared with the comment contained in the actual teaching and practice of the Church, as regards private masses.

This distinction between the words of the Tridentine divines and the authoritative teaching of the present Church, is made in the Tract itself, and would have been made in far stronger terms, had I not so very often before spoken against the actual state of the Church of Rome, or could I have anticipated the sensation which the appearance of the Tract has excited. I say,

> "By 'the Romish doctrine' is not meant the Tridentine doctrine, because this article was drawn up before the decree of the Council of Trent. What *is* opposed is the *received doctrine of the day*, and *unhappily of this day too*, or the *doctrine of the Roman Schools*."—p. 24.

This doctrine of the Schools is at present, on the whole, the established creed of the Roman Church, and this I call Romanism or Popery, and against this I think the Thirty-nine Articles speak. I think they speak, not of certain accidental practices, but of a *body* and *substance* of divinity, and that traditionary, an existing ruling spirit and view in the Church; which, whereas it is a corruption and perversion of the truth, is also a very active and energetic principle, and, whatever holier manifestations there may be in the same Church, manifests itself in ambition, insincerity, craft, cruelty, and all such other grave evils as are connected with these.

Further, I believe that the decrees of Trent, though not *necessarily* in themselves tending to the corruptions which we see, yet considering these corruptions exist, will ever tend to foster and produce them, as if principles and elements of them,—that is,

while these decrees remain unexplained in any truer and more Catholic way.

The distinction I have been making, is familiar with our controversialists. Dr. Lloyd, the late Bishop of Oxford, whose memory both you and myself hold in affection and veneration, brings it out strongly in a review which he wrote in the British Critic in 1825. Nay he goes further than any thing I have said on one point, for he thinks the Roman Catholics are not what they once were, at least among ourselves. I pronounce no opinion on this point; nor do I feel able to follow his revered guidance in some other things which he says, but I quote him in proof that the Reformers did not aim at decrees or abstract dogmas, but against a living system, and a system which it is quite possible to separate from the formal statements which have served to represent it.

"Happy was it," he says, "for the Protestant controversialist, when his own eyes and ears could bear witness to the doctrine of Papal satisfactions and meritorious works, when he could point to the benighted wanderer, working his way to the shrine of our Lady of Walsingham or Ipswich, and hear him confess with his own mouth, that he trusted to such works for the expiation of his sins; or when every eye could behold 'our churches full of images, wondrously decked and adorned, garlands and coronets set on their heads, precious pearls hanging about their necks, their fingers shining with rings, set with precious stones; their dead and still bodies, clothed with garments stiff with gold.'" *Hom.* 3. *ag. Idol.* p. 97.

On the other hand he says:

"Our full belief is that the Roman Catholics of the

United Kingdom, from their long residence among Protestants, their disuse of processions and other Romish ceremonies, have been brought gradually and almost unknowingly to a more spiritual religion and a purer faith,—that they themselves see with sorrow the disgraceful tenets and principles that were professed and carried into practice by their forefathers,—and are too fond of removing this disgrace from them, by denying the former existence of these tenets, and ascribing the imputation of them to the calumnies of the Protestants. This we cannot allow; and while we cherish the hope that they are now gone for ever, we still assert boldly and fearlessly, that they did once exist." p. 148.

Again:

"That latria is due only to the Trinity, is continually asserted *in the Councils;* but the terms of dulia and hyperdulia, *have not been adopted or acknowledged by them in their public documents;* they are, however, *employed unanimously by all the best writers of the Romish Church,* and their use is maintained and defended by them." p. 101.

I conceive that what "all the best writers" say is authoritative teaching, and a sufficient object for the censures conveyed in the Articles, though the decrees of Trent, taken by themselves, remain untouched.

"This part of the enquiry" [to define exactly the acts peculiar to the different species of worship] "however is more theoretical than useful; and, as every thing that can be said on it must be derived, *not from Councils,* but from *Doctors* of the Romish Church, whose authority would be called in question, it is not worth while to enter upon it now. And therefore, observing only that the *Catechism of Trent* still retains the term of, *adoratio angelorum,* we pass on, &c." p. 102.

Again:

"On the question whether the Invocation of Saints, professed and practised by the Church of Rome, is idolatrous or not, our opinion is this; that in *the public Formularies* of their Church, and even in the belief and practice of the best informed among them, there is *nothing of idolatry*, although, as we have said, we deem that practice altogether unscriptural and unwarranted; but we do consider the principles relating to the worship of the Virgin, calculated to lead in the end to positive idolatry; and we are well convinced, and we have strong grounds for our conviction, that a large portion of the lower classes are in this point guilty of it. Whether the Invocation of Angels or of Saints has produced the same effect, we are not able to decide." p. 113.

I accept this view entirely with a single explanation. By "principles" relating to the worship of the Blessed Virgin, I understand either the *received* principles as distinct from those laid down in the Tridentine statements; or the principles contained in those statements, viewed as *practically* operating on the existing feelings of the Church.

Again:

"She [the Church of England] is unwilling to fix upon the *principles* of the Romish Church the charge of positive idolatry; and contents herself with declaring that 'the Romish doctrine concerning the Adoration as well of Images as of Relics, is a fond thing, &c. &c.' But in regard to the universal *practice* of the Romish Church, *she adheres to the declaration of her Homilies;* and professes her conviction that this fond and unwarranted and unscriptural doctrine has at all times produced, and will hereafter, as long as it is suffered to prevail, produce the sin of *practical* idolatry." p. 121.

I will add my belief that the only thing which can stop this tendency in the decrees of Rome, as things are, is its making some formal declaration the other way.

Once more :

"We reject the second [Indulgences] not only because they are altogether unwarranted by any word of Holy Writ, and contrary to every principle of reason, but because we conceive the *foundations* on which they rest to be, in the highest degree, blasphemous and absurd. These *principles* are, 1. that the power of the Pope, great as it is, does not properly extend beyond the limits of this present world. 2. That the power which he possesses of releasing souls from Purgatory arises out of the treasure committed to his care, a treasure consisting of the supererogatory merits of our blessed Saviour, the Virgin, and the Saints . . . . . This is the treasure of which Pope Leo, in his Bull of the present year, 1825, speaks in the following terms: 'We have resolved, in virtue of the authority given to us by Heaven, fully to unlock that sacred treasure, composed of the merits, sufferings, and virtues of Christ our Lord, and of His Virgin Mother, and of all the Saints, which the Author of human salvation has entrusted to our dispensation.'" p. 143.

This is what our Article means by Pardons ; but it is more than is said in the Council of Trent.

I add a passage from Bramhall :

"A comprecation [with the Saints] both the Grecians and we do allow ; an ultimate invocation both the Grecians and we detest ; so do the Church of Rome *in their doctrine*, but they vary from it in their practice." Works, p. 418.

And from Bull :

"This Article [the Tridentine] of a Purgatory after this life, *as it is understood* and *taught* by the Roman Church

(*that is*, to be a place and state of misery and torment, whereunto many faithful souls go presently after death, and there remain till they are thoroughly purged from their dross, or *delivered thence by Masses, Indulgences*, &c.) is contrary to Scripture, and the sense of the Catholic Church for at least the first four Centuries, &c." *Corrupt. of Rom.* §. 3.

And from Wake:

"The Council of Trent has spoken *so uncertainly* in this point [of Merits] as plainly shews that they in this did not know themselves, what they would establish, or were unwilling that others should." *Def. of Expos.* 5.

I have now said enough on the point of distinction between the existing creed, or what I understand the Gentlemen who signed the protest to call the "authoritative teaching" of the Church of Rome, and its decrees. And while this distinction seems acknowledged by our controversialists, it is a *fact* that our Articles were written *before* those decrees, and therefore are levelled not against them, but against the authoritative teaching.

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I will put the subject in another way, which will lead us to the same point. If there is one doctrine more than another which characterizes the present Church of Rome, and on which all its obnoxious tenets depend, it is the doctrine of its *infallibility*. Now I am not aware that this doctrine is any where embodied in its formal decrees. Here then is a critical difference between its decrees and its received and established creed. Any one who believed that the Pope and Church of Rome are the essence of the infallibility of the Catholic Church, ought to join their Communion. If a person remains in our

Church, he thereby disowns the infallibility of Rome —and is its infallibility a slight characteristic of the Romish, or Romanistic, or Papal system, by whatever name we call it? is it not, I repeat, that on which all the other errors of its received teaching depend?

The Four Gentlemen

"are at a loss to see what security would remain, were his [the writer's] principles generally recognised, that the most plainly erroneous doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome might not be inculcated in the Lecture Rooms of the University and from the Pulpits of our Churches."

Here is a doctrine, which could not enter our Lecture Rooms and Pulpits—Rome's infallibility—and if this is excluded, then also are excluded those doctrines which depend, I may say, solely on it, not on Scripture, not on reason, not on antiquity, not on Catholicity. For who is it that gives the doctrine of Pardons their existing meaning which our Article condemns? The Pope; as in the words of Leo in 1825, as above quoted from Bishop Lloyd. Who is it that has exalted the honour of the Blessed Virgin into worship of an idolatrous character? The Pope; as when he sanctioned Bonaventura's Psalter. In a word, who is the recognised interpreter of all the Councils but the Pope?

On this whole subject I will quote from a work, in which, with some little variation of wording, I said the very same thing four years ago without offence.

"There are in fact two elements in operation within the system. As far as it is Catholic and Scriptural, it appeals

to the Fathers; as far as it is a corruption, it finds it necessary to supersede them. Viewed in its *formal principles* and authoritative statements, it professes to be the champion of past times; viewed as an active and political power, as a ruling, grasping, and ambitious principle, in a word, what is expressly called Popery, it exalts the will and pleasure of the existing Church above all authority, whether of Scripture or Antiquity, interpreting the one and disposing of the other by its absolute and arbitrary decree . . . We must deal with her as we would towards a friend who is visited by derangement . . . she is her real self only in name. . . . Viewed as a practical system, its main tenet, which gives a colour to all its parts, is the Church's infallibility, as on the other hand the principle of that genuine theology out of which it has arisen, is the authority of Catholic antiquity."—On Romanism, pp. 102—4.

Nothing more then is implied in the Tract than that Rome is *capable* of a reformation; its corrupt system indeed cannot be reformed; it can only be destroyed; and that destruction is *its* reformation. I do not think that there is any thing very erroneous or very blameable in such a belief; and it seems to be a very satisfactory omen in its favour, that at the Council of Trent such protests, as are quoted in the Tract, were entered against so many of the very errors and corruptions which our Articles and Homilies also condemn. I do not think it is any great excess of charity towards the largest portion of Christendom, to rejoice to detect such a point of agreement between them and us, as a joint protest against some of their greatest corruptions, though they in practice cherish them, though they still differ from us in other points

besides. That I have not always consistently kept to this view in all that I have written, I am well aware; yet I have made very partial deviations from it.

I should not be honest if I did not add, that I consider our own Church, on the other hand, to have in it a traditionary system, as well as the Roman, beyond and beside the letter of its Formularies, and to be ruled by a spirit far inferior to its own nature. And this traditionary system, not only inculcates what I cannot receive, but would exclude any difference of belief from itself. To this exclusive modern system, I desire to oppose myself; and it is as doing this, doubtless, that I am incurring the censure of the Four Gentlemen who have come before the public. I want certain points to be left open which they would close. I am not speaking for myself in one way or another; I am not examining the scripturalness, safety, propriety, or expedience of the points in question; but I desire that it may not be supposed to be utterly unlawful for such private Christians as feel they can do it with a clear conscience, to allow a comprecation with the Saints as Bramhall does; or to hold with Andrewes that, taking away the doctrine of Transubstantiation from the Mass, we shall have no dispute about the Sacrifice; or with Hooker to treat even Transubstantiation as an opinion which by itself need not cause separation; or to hold with Hammond that no general Council, truly such, ever did, or shall err in any matter of Faith; or with Bull, that man was in a supernatural state of grace before the fall, by which he could

attain to immortality, and that he has recovered it in Christ; or with Thorndike, that works of humiliation and penance are requisite to render God again propitious to those who fall from the grace of Baptism; or with Pearson, that the Name of Jesus is no otherwise given under Heaven than in the Catholic Church.

In thus maintaining that we have open questions, or as I have expressed it in the Tract "ambiguous Formularies," I observe, first, that I am introducing no novelty. For instance, it is commonly said that the Articles admit both Arminians and Calvinists; the *principle* then is admitted, as indeed the Four Gentlemen, whom I have several times noticed, themselves observe. I do not think it a greater latitude than this, to admit those who hold, and those who do not hold, the points above specified.

Nor, secondly, can it be said that such an interpretation throws any uncertainty upon the primary and most sacred doctrines of our religion. These are consigned to the Creed; the Articles did not define them; they existed before the Articles; they are referred to in the Articles as existing *facts*, just as the broad Roman errors are referred to; but the decrees of Trent were drawn up after the Articles.

On these two points, I may be allowed to quote what I said four years ago in a former Tract.

"The meaning of the Creed . . . is known; there is no opportunity for doubt here; it means but one thing, and he who does not hold that one meaning, does not hold it at all. But the case is different (to take an illustration)

in the drawing up of a Political Declaration or a Petition to Parliament. It is composed by persons, differing in matters of detail, agreeing together to a certain point and for a certain end. Each narrowly watches that nothing is inserted to prejudice his own particular opinion, or stipulates for the insertion of what may rescue it. Hence general words are used, or particular words inserted, which by superficial enquirers afterwards are criticised as vague and indeterminate on the one hand, or inconsistent on the other; but in fact, they all have a meaning and a history, could we ascertain it. And if the parties concerned in such a document are legislating and determining for posterity, they are respective representatives of corresponding parties in the generations after them. Now the Thirty-Nine Articles lie between these two, between a Creed and a mere joint Declaration; to a certain point they have one meaning, beyond that they have no one meaning. They have one meaning so far as they embody the doctrine of the Creed; they have different meanings, so far as they are drawn up by men influenced by the discordant opinions of the day." *Tract* 82.

These two points—that our Church allows (1) a great diversity in doctrine, (2.) except as to the Creed,—are abundantly confirmed by the following testimonies of Bramhall, Laud, Hall, Taylor, Bull, and Stillingfleet, which indeed go far beyond any thing I have said.

For instance, Bull, Bramhall, and Hall:

"What next he [a Roman Catholic objector] saith concerning our notorious prevarication from the Articles of our Church, I do not perfectly understand. He very well knows, that all our Clergy doth still subscribe them: and if any man hath dared openly to oppose the declared sense of the Church of England in any one of those Articles, he is liable to ecclesiastical censure, which would be more dul

passed and executed, did not the divisions and fanatic disturbances, first raised and still fomented by the blessed emissaries of the Apostolic See, hinder and blunt the edge of our discipline. But possibly he intends that latitude of sense, which our Church, as an indulgent mother, allows her sons in some abstruser points, (such as Predestination, &c.) not particularly and precisely defined in her Articles, but in general words capable of an indifferent construction. If this be his meaning, this is so far from being a fault, that it is the singular praise and commendation of our Church. As for our being concluded by the Articles of our Church, if he means our being obliged to give our internal assent to every thing delivered in them upon peril of damnation, it is confessed that few, yea, none of us, that are well advised, will acknowledge ourselves so concluded by them, nor did our Church ever intend we should. For she professeth not to deliver all her Articles (all I say, for *some* of them are coincident with the *fundamental* points of Christianity) as essentials of faith, without the belief whereof no man can be saved; but only propounds them as a body of safe and pious principles, *for the preservation of peace to be subscribed*, and not openly contradicted by her sons. And therefore she requires subscription to them only from the Clergy, and not from the laity, who yet are obliged to acknowledge and profess all the fundamental Articles of the Christian faith, no less than the most learned Doctors. This hath often been told the Papists by many learned writers of our Church. I shall content myself (at present) only with two illustrious testimonies of two famous Prelates. The late terror of the Romanists, Dr. Usher, [Bramhall?] the most learned and reverend Primate of Ireland, thus expresseth the sense of the Church of England, as to the Subscription required to the Thirty-Nine Articles; 'We do not suffer any man to reject the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England at his pleasure, yet neither do we look upon them as essentials of saving faith, or

legacies of Christ and His Apostles; but in a mean, as pious opinions, *fitted for the preservation of peace and unity; neither do we oblige any man to believe them*, but only not to contradict them.' So the excellent Bishop Hall, in his *Catholic Propositions*, (truly so called,) denieth, in general, that any Church can lawfully propose any Articles to her sons, besides those contained in the common rule of Faith, to be believed under pain of damnation. His third proposition is this; 'The sum of the Christian faith are those principles of the Christian religion, and fundamental grounds and points of faith, which are undoubtedly contained and laid down in the canonical Scriptures, whether in express terms or by necessary consequence, and in the ancient Creeds universally received and allowed by the whole Church of God.'"

And then in the seventh and eighth Propositions, he speaks fully to our purpose.—*Prop.* 7. 'There are and may be many theological points, which are wont to be believed and maintained, and so may lawfully be, of this or that particular Church, or the Doctors thereof, or their followers, as godly doctrines and profitable truths, besides those other essential and main matters of Faith, without any prejudice at all of the common peace of the Church.'—*Prop* 8. 'Howsoever it may be lawful for learned men and particular Churches to believe and maintain those probable or (as they may think) certain points of theological verities, yet *it is not lawful for them to impose and obtrude the same doctrines upon any Church or person*, to be believed and held, as upon the necessity of salvation; or to anathematize or eject out of the Church any person or company of men that think otherwise.'

"As for the fundamental principles of the Christian religion, undoubtedly delivered in the Scriptures, and allowed (except the Romanists, who have so affected singularity, as to frame to themselves a new Christianity) by the whole Church of God, they are by the consent of all

Christians acknowledged to be contained in that called the Creed, or rule of Faith.

"This rule of Faith, and that also as it is more fully explained by the first General Councils, our Church heartily embraceth, and hath made a part of her Liturgy, and so hath obliged all her sons to make solemn profession thereof. To declare this more distinctly to your ladyship, our Church receiveth that which is called the Apostles' Creed, and enjoins the public profession thereof to all her sons in her Daily Service. And if this Creed be not thought express enough fully to declare the sense of the Catholic Church in points of necessary belief, and to obviate the precise interpretations of heretics, she receiveth also that admirable summary of the Christian faith, which is called the Nicene Creed, (but is indeed the entire ancient Creed of the Oriental Churches, together with the necessary additional explications thereof, made by Fathers both of the Council of Nice against Arius, and the Council of Constantinople against Macedonius,) the public profession whereof she also enjoins all her sons (without any exception) to make in the Morning Service of every Sunday and Holy-day. This creed she professeth (consentaneously to her own principles) to receive upon this ground primarily, because she finds that the articles thereof may be proved by most evident testimonies of Scripture; although she deny not, that she is confirmed in her belief of this Creed, because she finds all the articles thereof, in all ages, received by the Catholic Church." *Vindication of the Church of England*, 27.

And Stillingfleet:

"The Church of England makes no Articles of Faith, but such as have the testimony and approbation of the whole Christian world of all ages, and are acknowledged to be such by Rome itself, and in other things she requires

subscription to them not as Articles of Faith, but as Inferior Truths which she expects a submission to, *in order to her Peace and Tranquillity.* So the late learned L. Primate of Ireland [Bramhall] often expresseth the sense of the Church of England, as to her Thirty-Nine Articles. 'Neither doth the Church of England,' saith he, 'define any of these questions, as necessary to be believed, either necessitate medii, *or* necessitate præcepti, which is much less; *but only bindeth her sons for peace sake, not to oppose them.*' And in another place more fully. We do not suffer any man to reject the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England at his pleasure; yet neither do we look upon them as Essentials of saving Faith, or Legacies of Christ and His Apostles: but in a mean, *as pious Opinions fitted for the preservation of Unity; neither do we oblige any man to believe them,* but only not to contradict them.' By which we see, what a vast difference there is between those things which are required by the Church of England, *in order to Peace;* and those which are imposed by the Church of Rome, as part of that Faith, *extra quam non est salus,* without the belief of which there is no salvation. In which she hath as much violated the Unity of the Catholic Church, as the Church of England by her Prudence and Moderation hath studied to preserve it." *Grounds of Protestant Rel.* part i. chap. 11.

And Laud:

"A. C. will prove the Church of England a Shrew, and such a Shrew. For in her Book of Canons she excommunicates every man, who shall hold any thing contrary to any part of the said Articles. So A. C. But surely these are not the very words of the Canon nor perhaps the sense. Not the words; for they are: Whosoever shall affirm that the Articles are in any part superstitious or erroneous, &c. And perhaps not the sense. For it is one thing for a man to *hold an opinion privately within himself,* and another thing

boldly and publicly to affirm it. And again, 'tis one thing to hold contrary to some part of an Article, which perhaps may be but in the manner of Expression, and another thing positively to affirm, that the Articles in any part of them are superstitious, and erroneous. *On Tradition*, xiv. 2.

And Taylor :—

"I will not pretend to believe that those doctors who first framed the Article, did all of them mean as I mean; I am not sure they did, or that they did not; but this I am sure, that they framed the words with much caution and prudence, and so as might abstain from grieving the contrary minds of differing men. . . . . It is not unusual for Churches, in matters of difficulty, to frame their articles so as *to serve the ends of peace*, and yet not to endanger truth, or to destroy liberty of improving truth, or a further reformation. And since there are so very many questions and opinions in this point, either all the Dissenters must be allowed to reconcile the Article and their opinion, or must refuse her communion; which whosoever shall enforce, is a great schismatic and an uncharitable man. This only is certain, that to tie the article and our doctrine together, is an excellent art of peace, and a certain signification of obedience; and yet is a security of truth, and that just liberty of understanding, which, because it is only God's subject, is then sufficiently submitted to men, when we consent in the same form of words."—*Further Explic. Orig. Sin.* § 6.

This view of the Articles conveyed in these extracts evidently allows, as I have said above, of much greater freedom in the private opinions of individuals, subscribing them, than I have contended for.

While I am on this subject, I will make this remark in addition :—That though I consider that the

wording of the Articles is wide enough to admit persons of very different sentiments from each other in detail, provided they agree in some broad general sense of them, (*e. g.* differing from each other whether or not there is *any* state of purification after death, or whether or not *any* addresses are allowable to Saints departed, so that they one and all condemn the Roman doctrine of Purgatory and of Invocation as actually taught and carried into effect,) yet I do not leave the Articles without their *one legitimate sense* in preference to all other senses. The only peculiarity of the view I advocate, if I must so call it, is this,—that, whereas it is usual at this day to make the particular *belief of their writers* their true interpretation, I would make the *belief of the Catholic Church* such. That is, as it is often said that infants are regenerated in Baptism, not on the faith of their *parents* but of the *Church*, so in like manner I would say the Articles are received, not in the sense of their framers, but (as far as the wording will admit or any ambiguity requires it,) in the one Catholic sense. For instance as to Purgatory, I consider (with the Homily) that the Article opposes the main idea really encouraged by Rome, that temporary punishment is a substitute for hell in the case of the unholy, and all the superstitions consequent thereupon. As to Invocation, that the Article opposes, not every sort of calling on beings short of God, (for certain passages in the Psalms are such,) but all that *trenches on worship*, (as the Homily puts it,) the question whether *ora pro nobis* be such, being open,—not indifferent indeed, but a most grave

and serious one for any individual who feels drawn to it, but still undecided by the Article. As to Images, the Article condemns all approach to idolatrous regard, such as Rome does in point of fact encourage. As to the Mass, all that impairs or obscures the doctrine of the one Atonement, once offered, which Masses, as in use in the Church of Rome, actually have done.

2. And now, if you will permit me to add a few words more, I will briefly state *why* I am anxious about securing this liberty for us.

Every one sees a different portion of society; and, judging of what is done by its effect upon that portion, comes to very different conclusions about its utility, expedience, and propriety. That the Tract in question has been very inexpedient as addressed to one class of persons is quite certain; but it was meant for another, and I sincerely think is necessary for them. And in giving the reason, I earnestly wish even those who do not admit or feel it, yet to observe that I *had* a reason.

In truth there is at this moment a great progress of the religious mind of our Church to something deeper and truer than satisfied the last century. I always have contended, and will contend, that it is not satisfactorily accounted for by any particular movements of individuals on a particular spot. The poets and philosophers of the age have borne witness to it many years. Those great names in our literature, Sir Walter Scott, Mr. Wordsworth, Mr. Coleridge, though in different ways and with

essential differences one from another, and perhaps from any Church system, still all bear witness to it. Mr. Alexander Knox in Ireland bears a most surprising witness to it. The system of Mr. Irving is another witness to it. The age is moving towards something, and most unhappily the one religious communion among us which has of late years been practically in possession of this something, is the Church of Rome. She alone, amid all the errors and evils of her practical system, has given free scope to the feelings of awe, mystery, tenderness, reverence, devotedness, and other feelings which may be especially called Catholic. The question then is, whether we shall give them up to the Roman Church or claim them for ourselves, as we well may, by reverting to that older system, which has of late years indeed been superseded, but which has been, and is, quite congenial, (to say the least,) I should rather say proper and natural, or even necessary to our Church. But if we do give them up, then we must give up the men who cherish them. We must consent either to give up the men, or to admit their principles.

Now, I say, I speak of what especially comes under my eye, when I express my conviction that this is a very serious question at this time. It is not a theoretical question at all. I may be wrong in my conviction, I may be wrong in the mode I adopt to meet it, but still the Tract is grounded on the belief that the Articles *need* not be so closed as the received method of teaching closes them, and *ought* not to be for the sake of many persons. If

we will close them, we run the risk of subjecting persons whom we should least like to lose or distress, to the temptation of joining the Church of Rome, or to the necessity of withdrawing from the Church as established, or to the misery of subscribing with doubt and hesitation. And, as to myself, I was led especially to exert myself with reference to this difficulty, from having had it earnestly urged upon me by parties I revere, to do all I could to keep members of our Church from straggling in the direction of Rome; and, not being able to pursue the methods commonly adopted, and being persuaded that the view of the Articles I have taken is true and honest, I was anxious to set it before them. I thought it would be useful to them, without hurting any one else.

I have no wish or thought to do more than to claim an admission for these persons to the right of subscription. Of course I should rejoice if the members of our Church were all of one mind; but they are not; and till they are, one can but submit to what is at present the will, or rather the chastisement, of Providence. And let me now implore my brethren *to* submit, and not to force an agreement at the risk of a schism.

In conclusion, I will but express my great sorrow that I have at all startled or offended those for whom I have nothing but respectful and kind feelings. That I am startled myself in turn, that persons, who have in years past and present borne patiently disclaimers of the Athanasian Creed, or of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, or of belief

in many of the Scripture miracles, should now be alarmed so much, when a private Member of the University, without his name, makes statements in an opposite direction, I must also avow. Nor can I repent of what I have published. Still, whatever has been said, or is to be done in consequence, is, I am sure, to be ascribed to the most conscientious feelings; and though it may grieve me, I trust it will not vex me, or make me less contented and peaceful in myself.

Ever yours most sincerely,

J. H. N.

Saturday,
March 13*th*, 1841.

It may be necessary to notice one or two inaccuracies in the Tract. Such is a quotation from Bp. Andrewes, instead of one from Bp. Ken; and the word *Angel* for *Spirit*, in page 36, (though the passage itself perhaps had, as a matter of expedience, better have been omitted,) and *Ratification* for *Declaration*, in page 80.

¶ Since the above was in type, it has been told me that the Hebdomadal Board has recorded its opinion about the Tract.

POSTSCRIPT.

I am led by circumstances, in order to explain the Tract more fully, to add:

1. That I have most honestly stated in the above Letter what was intended, though not expressed in the Tract, about the actual dominant errors of the Church of Rome. The Tract was no *feeler*, as it is called, put forth to see how far one might go without notice, nor is the Letter a retractation. Those who are immediately about me, know that in the interval between the printing and publication of the Tract, I was engaged in writing some Letters about Romanism, in which I spoke of the impossibility of any approach of the English towards the Roman Church, arising out of the present state of the latter, as strongly as I did a year ago, or as I do now in my Letter.

2. Again as to the object of my Pamphlet. I can declare most honestly that my reason for writing and publishing it, without which I should not have done it, and which was before my mind from first to last, was, as I have stated it in my Letter, the quieting the consciences of persons who considered (falsely as I think) that the Articles prevent them holding views found in the Primitive Church. That while I was writing it, I was not unwilling to shew that the Decrees of Trent were but partially, if at all, committed to certain popular errors, I fully grant; but even this I did with reference to others.

In explanation of the sensation which the Tract has caused, (as far as it arises from the Tract itself,) I observe:

1. The Tract was addressed to one set of persons, and has been used and commented on by another.

2. As its Author had very frequently and lately entered his protest against many things in the Roman system, he

more than popular errors &c. &c.

did not see that it was necessary to repeat them, when that system did not form the direct object of the Tract; and the consciousness how strongly he had pledged himself against Rome, as it is, made him, as persons about him know full well, quite unsuspicious of the possibility of any sort of misunderstanding arising out of his statements in it.

3. Those who had happened to read his former publications, understanding him to *identify* rather than *connect* the decrees of Trent with the peculiar Roman errors, were led perhaps to think, that in speaking charitably of those decrees he was speaking tenderly of those errors. And it must be confessed that, though he has uniformly maintained the existence of the errors in the Church of Rome both before and after the Tridentine Council, yet he has sometimes spoken of the decrees rather as the essential development, than the existing symbol and index of the errors.

4. There was, confessedly, a vagueness and deficiency in some places as to the conclusions he would draw from the premises stated, and a consequent opening to the charge of a disingenuous understatement of the contrariety between the Articles and the actual Roman system. This arose in great measure from his being more bent on laying down his principle than defining its results.

5. It arose also from the circumstance that, the main drift of the Tract being that of illustrating the Articles from the *Homilies*, the doctrines of the Articles are sometimes brought out only so far as the Homilies explain them, which is in some cases an inadequate representation.

I will add, moreover, 1. That in the expression "ambiguous Formularies," I did not think of referring to the Prayer Book. And I suppose all persons will grant, that if the Articles treat of Predestination, and yet can be signed by Arminians and Calvinists, they are not clear on all points. But I gladly withdraw the phrase. And I express now, as

I often have done before, my great veneration for those ancient forms of worship which, by God's good providence, are preserved to us.

2. That I did not mean at all to assert that persons called High-Churchmen have a difficulty in holding Catholic principles consistently with a subscription to the Articles; on the contrary, I observe in the Tract, that "the objection" on this score "is groundless;" yet that there are many who have felt it, however causelessly, I know, and certainly *have* said.

3. That I had no intention whatever of implying that there are not many persons of Catholic views in our Church, and those more worthy of consideration than myself, who deny that the Reformers were uncatholic. I consider the question quite an open one.

4. That, in implying that certain modified kinds of Invocation, veneration of Relics, &c. might be Catholic, I did not mean to rule it, that they were so; but considered it an open question, whether they were or not, which I did not wish decided one way or the other, and which I considered the Articles left open. At the same time it is quite certain, that such practices as the Invocation of Saints, cannot justly be called Catholic in the same sense in which the doctrine of the Incarnation is, or the Episcopal principle.

5. That my mode of interpreting the Articles is not of a lax and indefinite character, but one which goes upon a plain and intelligible principle, viz. that of the Catholic sense; or, in the words of the Tract, "in the most Catholic sense they will admit."

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